



# News Release

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## **Childhood immunization rates continue to improve – 3 in 4 kids protected**

*Whooping cough epidemic shows the need to keep up-to-date on vaccines*

**OLYMPIA** — Immunization rates for Washington toddlers continue to improve – 75 percent of children ages 3 and under got a series of recommended vaccines in 2011. That's up from 71 percent in 2010, according to the National Immunization Survey. For the first time, Washington's rate is above the national average, 74 percent.

"We know that parents want to make sure their kids are safe and healthy," said State Health Officer Dr. Maxine Hayes, a pediatrician. "There are so many tragic diseases that can be prevented by making sure children get recommended vaccines. It's one of the most important things a parent can do to protect their children, families, and communities from serious preventable diseases."

The survey measures a series of six vaccines (DTaP, polio, MMR, hepatitis B, chickenpox, and pneumococcal); some require multiple doses. Kids must have all doses to be included in the rate. For the vaccines included in the series, estimates increased for chickenpox, DTaP, and pneumococcal vaccines, driving the overall series increase. Despite the improved rate, Washington is still behind the state and national goal of 80 percent for the series.

Immunization rates for DTaP, the whooping cough vaccine recommended for young children through age 6, increased from 82 percent to 86 percent. The national average is 85 percent. Even though this increase isn't statistically significant, it's an encouraging sign that rates are moving in the right direction – especially in the midst of a whooping cough epidemic.

"The whooping cough epidemic is still with us and getting vaccinated is the best protection," Dr. Hayes said. "Whooping cough can be life-threatening for young babies. It's crucial that we protect babies and make sure that family members and caregivers are vaccinated."

— More —

Nearly 4,000 cases of whooping cough have been reported so far in 2012 – more than 10 times the cases reported during the same time period in 2011. This year there have been 270 reported cases in infants; 53 of them were hospitalized. No deaths have been reported in 2012.

The survey also includes rates for individual vaccines, such as the measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) and chickenpox vaccines. The goal for each individual vaccine is 90 percent – Washington met this goal only for the polio vaccine. Rates increased significantly for the rotavirus and *Haemophilus influenzae* type b (Hib) vaccines.

Kids must be vaccinated on time for the best protection; missing or delaying even one vaccine leaves kids at risk. Although these data show that most parents protect their children from serious diseases through vaccination, some parents have questions and concerns. The state health department provides resources for parents and health care providers so that families have reliable information about immunizations.

Washington provides all recommended vaccines for children through age 18, available from health care providers across the state. Providers may charge an office visit and a fee to give the vaccine (administration fee). People who can't afford the administration fee can ask to have it waived. For help finding a provider or immunization clinic, contact the [local health agency](#) in your area or the [Family Health Hotline](#) at 1-800-322-2588.

More information on immunization is on the [Department of Health Office website](#). The [National Immunization Survey](#) is available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. County-level data is not included in the survey.

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